1/25/75

Ms. Mildred Sola Neely, Trade News Editor
Publishers Weekly
1180 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Ms. Neely,

While our correspondence about my recent book, Whitewash IV:Top Secret JFK Assassination Transcript, leaves no doubt that writing you further can mean nothing for me, I take the time in the hope that there may be some reassessment of what is publishing "news" and what I take to be a prejudiced attitude toward smallness.

Particularly because recent news developments relating to the CIA make this the most topical of books and with the most definitive content on the CIA alone.

You say you need information "at least 10 weeks before publication." Do you tell Bantam this when they turn out a "special?" Bantam is not the only such case.

With the three previous books of the Whitewash series PW faced no such need.

In fact, I had no such time. How rapidly one man can do a topical book that finds no duplication in the output of the largest publishers is, I would think, information all in publishing could use. It took me nothing like 10 weeks to write and print this book. The one before it was exactly 28 days from the time I wrote the introduction until the printer delivered the press copies, with a sewed binding. And that book had a complete name and subject index.

The assassination of a President is a major event. No book, whether or not a substantial work, produced by a major publisher is today available. The sale of mine is an everyday occurrence, after almost 10 years. Can you imagine the sale these books could have if they had decent distribution? I am really asking is publishing serving the national need? And is PW? In not mentioning this newest book, which is not in any sense duplicated in any other work or any period, is not PW in effect suppressing? What is this arbitrary need for 10-weeks notice? I am hearing every day from people who have combed the stores without success and finally write me. Yesterday's mail included letters of this nature sent to an address we left more than seven years ago. People are interested. They are not being served and the interest of the stores is not.

In not mentioning the mere existence of this book PW is, in effect, suppressing news about the CIA when it serves the interest of wrong-doing spooks for this information to be suppressed. (The percentage of non-deliveries by the post office is high.) This information, which I obtained by going to court, is a suppressed official transcript 90 pages long. It has the word of the former chief spook Dulles he never expected anyone to see - ever. What he said about everyone in the CIA always swearing falsely and how right and proper that is ought not be available to the people? How can it be is PW refuses even the merest mention?

Gild lilies as you will, you are suppressing. And this has not been my experience with PW when I never had any lead time for notification.

I am a former reporter. I see many news pegs for this book, if one were not more interested in avoiding the legitimate news as it relates to publishing. And how publishing serves the market and other national interests.

Were I Random House and I sued for such a sensational document so long suppressed that would not be news?

Were I Dell and one of my suits (four through court to date) to give the Freedom of Information law meaning led the Senate to amend the law and over-ride a veto (Congressional Record 5/30/74), that would not be news?

Any litigation relating to publishing that goes to the Supreme Court is not news? I was there and it was unreported.

Were I to stretch a little, by traditional standards I think I could allege that when so small a publisher, so without means, has this kind of a record on freedom of information that is itself is unusual enough to be news. No publishers' organization supported any of this litigation in any way, not even by reporting it. In my thinking this, too, is a kind of news as it relates to the freedom of publishers and the right and need of the people in a representative society to know.

I think that for the industry the existence and the availability of this book is legitimate news until it is reported. And I think this kind of reporting is the unique function of PW.

I did send you a copy. It was not returned to me. The envelope has a printed return address. Because of troubles in the mail I tape each package four times. But the wrapper has not been returned. Another copy did not reach The New York Times. One did not reach a British film maker who was in New York working on a documentary. (The New York Post Office did return part of that wrapper. It clearly had been cut open.) Each book has my address printed in it. Postal regulations require the return to an available address. But not one of the undelivered books has been returned in two months.

In time it will be public that I, so small a publisher, have been the subject of CIA domestic interest. I have had no foreign contacts except in publishing. My lawyer and I have been in touch with the CIA on this. Once it learned I have copies of some of the surveillance, it abandoned its denials and only this week confirmed the existence of files on me. I tell you this for added context to what I regard as suppression whatever motivates refusal to mention the book. I do not want publicity on it. Nor will I exploit it, legitimate as that would be, to sell the book. My purposes are serious. They include a diligent effort to make the system work. I am seeking redress of grevance by the book, not by publicity.

Despite these kinds of pressures and no funding at all, meaning no advertising possible, I have, in two months, been paid for enough sold copies to have repaid more than a third of the costs. (Not counting my own work, which is unpaid.) The print was 6,000.

One might find commentary in this record of a one-man publisher.

This time I'm sending Mr. Johnston a copy separately. Whether or not he elects to review, and I know he can't review all books, from his perceptive and fair review of my Frame-Up, which has an unusual record of influencing events, the courts and the state of the law, he may have personal interest.

I regret and lament anything like publishing tunnel vision at this time in our national life. Whatever the cause, it serves the industry and the country poorly.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Albert Johnston